

Snohomish County Agricultural Advisory Board

Jackson Board Room

December 13, 2011

12:30 p.m.

MEETING SUMMARY

12:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order, Introductions, Announcements – Chair

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jesse Allen (Position 10 - Stillaguamish River Basin)

Brian Bookey (Position 4 - Commodity Crops)

Mike Bueler (Position 1 - Dairy)

Mike Harnden (Position 2 - Nursery)

Gerald Labish (Position 3 - Livestock)

Jackie Macomber (Position 8 - Equine)

Marv Thomas, Chair (Position 11 - Snohomish River Basin)

BOARD MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Mark Craven, Vice Chair (Position 5 - Agricultural Direct Marketing)

Dave Remlinger (Position 6 - Diking Drainage & Flood Control Districts in Snohomish River Basin)

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Max Albert, Stillaguamish Flood Control District

Merle Ash, Rural Landowner

Naeem Iqbal, Hima Farms

Howard Knight, Snohomish County PDS

Linda Kuller, Snohomish County PDS

Monte Marti, Snohomish Conservation District

John Misich, Farmer

Ed Moats, Snohomish County Farm Bureau

Tom Niemann, Snohomish County PDS

Linda Neunzig, Snohomish County Economic Development

Peter Ojala, Carson Law Group

Larry Pickering, King County Agriculture Commission

John Postema, Snohomish County Growers Alliance

Kate Roesler, Snohomish County Farm Bureau

Tom Rowe, Snohomish County PDS

Debbie Terwilliger, Snohomish County DPW SWM

Clay White, Snohomish County PDS

Board members and attendees were welcomed to the December 2011 Ag Advisory Board meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Marv Thomas, and introductions made by Board members present.

12:35 p.m.

2. Approval of 11/08/11 Meeting Summary – All

The November 8 Regular Meeting Summary was approved as written/presented to the Board.

12:40 p.m.

3. Public Comment:

- Ed Moats commented on the proposed Substandard Lots/BLAs ordinance. He said he recently met with some land use consultants and questioned why, when it would deny property rights, this ordinance is moving forward. The Council hearing has been continued until January 18.
- John Postema suggested that the Board consider changing their Bylaws to a simple majority for voting purposes, as long as there is a quorum of Board members present.
- Peter Ojala pointed out what he sees inconsistencies between permit requirements under the Shoreline Management Act and the “floodway” definition in the shorelines of the state. If there are plans to address this topic at an upcoming subcommittee meeting, he would like to attend and bring up his concerns. Mr. White asked Mr. Ojala to forward him those case citations so he has an opportunity to review them prior to providing the Board with feedback at next month’s Ag Board meeting.
- Max Albert is attending today’s meeting on behalf of the Stillaguamish Flood Control District. He provided the Board with copies of a letter the district sent to SWM on December 9, regarding a salmon restoration project on the Matterand property near Stanwood. The district’s main concern is that there could be possible negative impacts on upstream drainage by removing river channelization. By using a Hydrologic-Geomorphic model, SWM is fast tracking a study of this project. (Note: Ms. Terwilleger’s response to Mr. Albert’s concerns is summarized under today’s Agenda Item #4: County Reports – Response to questions on Smith Island Project.)

12:55 p.m.

4. County Reports:

a. Response to questions on Smith Island Project DEIS – Debbie Terwilleger

- During last month’s Ag Board meeting, the following questions were raised about the Smith Island Project:
 - 1) **As an alternative, is the County considering renewing its efforts to acquire farmland to the west of the proposed dike alignment?** Ms. Terwilleger noted that we are not in negotiations with the landowner west of the proposed dike alignment. However, we are conducting technical studies to address the questions that came up through the EIS process and are working with Diking District 5 to address drainage issues, analyze the alignment that was put forward, and determine what is needed to ensure salinity doesn’t negatively impact that property. We would then be in a position to consider the cost benefits of other alternatives. As published in the DEIS, we are still pursuing the option of breaching the dikes and constructing a new alignment, but we haven’t eliminated other alternatives, including possible negotiations with that property owner.
 - 2) **How is Smith Island being addressed through the SLS process?** Phase 2 of the SLS has included discussions with stakeholders to come up with three reach-scale packages, for the lower Skykomish, Stillaguamish, and Snohomish River Basins, that will be beneficial to both restoration and agriculture. Smith Island is a part of the Snohomish River Basin package. We are hoping to move forward those projects that will improve Ag viability and will present those three packages to the SLS Executive Committee in order to receive some guidance as to the balance of those packages. In other areas in the Snohomish River Basin, WDFW did a study to determine whether a dike reaching restoration was feasible, but that option was too cost prohibitive. WDFW is considering ways that their property could be enhanced for Ag on Ebey Island. We should be able to provide you with an update during the Ag Board’s February meeting, to give you a sense of the elements on each of those three packages are.

- **Ms. Terwilleger also wanted to respond to Mr. Albert's concerns about how the Matterand property is being addressed through the SLS.** The tribes presented the acquisition as a grant application. At the time, we were in the middle of the SLS process, so all of the parties agreed to study this project's potential impacts prior to committing funds and resources to purchase the properties. In the past, those same conversations would not have taken place, but the SLS process and coordination between the parties has already proved to be very successful. When the Watershed Council was considering various grant applications, the tribes decided to put this acquisition on hold until we could determine what the effects would be. We are now committed to funding geomorphic and hydraulic assessments of the Stillaguamish, so we can run a model that looks at varied scenarios. That modeling should be done by year end, with a few loose ends to wrap up by mid-January. We can then evaluate that information with the flood control district, the tribes and stakeholders in the Stillaguamish River Basin before making any decisions.

Board members posed several questions of Ms. Terwilleger:

- 1) **How will property owners outside the Diking District be notified about this project's potential impacts?** We will need to evaluate possible impacts, and then have those conversations with individual landowners, followed by a larger meeting of stakeholders.
- 2) **Where is the tribe with their funding?** The Watershed Council made recommendation that the funds should be allocated for the acquisition of that property, pending the outcome of the assessment and community evaluations. They have made a good faith commitment to look at the potential impacts, but the funds are not yet available to acquire that property.
- 3) **Is PDR or TDR an option?** That depends on where the county goes in transitioning their PDR and TDR programs into floodway agricultural lands. TDR will be addressed on January's Ag Board meeting agenda.
- 4) **Is the landowner a farmer or speculator?** The property is owned by the Matterand family, but Rick Williams is currently farming it. The eldest family member passed away and the family has now put the property on the market and is looking for a buyer.
- 5) **Does Twin City Foods use it for drainage from their plant?** Mr. Albert responded that Twin City Foods has an easement to pump processed wastewater, through underground pipes, under the river and into a lagoon, then onto their fields during the growing season. Removing those dikes would make it very difficult to service those underground pipes.
- 6) **Mr. Bookey expressed his concern with the cost of that alternative.** Ms. Terwilleger responded that preliminary estimates would reduce construction costs by approximately \$500K if we controlled all the property and made the shortest possible dike, but it would still not remove the DOT's requirement to build a dike in order to protect the critical public facility. Feasibility studies must be conducted to ensure no negative impacts to adjacent properties. We can then determine the potential impacts, analyze our options, and make a collective decision.

b. Moving Forward: SAEDAT Strategies – Linda Neunzig

- We are making progress on identifying what has been accomplished, what still needs to be done, and pushing SAEDAT forward. PDS and SWM are working on filling in the blanks as to what projects have been completed. We've been working on the marketing piece as well. That group meets again on Thursday, January 12, at 10AM in the Economic Development Conference Room (6th Floor – Admin-East). Ms. Neunzig will send out a meeting notification. If everything goes as planned, we should be able to wrap everything up and publish a new SAEDAT Report by July 2012.

c. Ag Board role in planning 2012 Focus on Farming Conference – Linda Neunzig

- A new attendance record was set with 550 attending last month's conference, considerable growth from the 250 attendees at the first conference eight years ago. Ms. Neunzig noted that the Ag Board's work plan shows more involvement in planning next year's Focus on Farming event, and encouraged Board members to participate. She noted that the Planning Committee meets the first Friday of every month, with the frequency of those meetings increasing to twice monthly the two months prior to the

conference. The Planning Committee determines the six tracks for next year's conference, which vary from year to year, and considers sponsorships and participation in the vendor show. We also have funding available to bring in speakers of interest.

Mr. White pointed out that Board members already spend a great deal of time volunteering with the Board and on subcommittees every month and thinks we should be able to use the Focus on Farming event to convey information to a larger audience, by focusing on some of the topics we've addressed as a Board. Ms. Neunzig responded that they should be able to plan around the needs of attendees, line up speakers or a panel discussion representative of differing perspectives, and showcase this Ag Board as a model for conveying the relevant issues and resources available to the Ag community.

d. January meeting: *Western Washington Ag Commission/Board* – Linda Neunzig

- King County is putting together a half-day planning meeting, with 2-3 people from each Board/Commission coming together on January 25 to plan a full-day summit that will help identify the issues King, Snohomish and Skagit counties can work on together, as a region. We need a couple Board members to represent Snohomish County. It had already been requested that Dave Remlinger take part, so Board members suggested Mark Craven would provide a positive representation of Snohomish County agriculture. Marv Thomas will verify with both Dave and Mark that they are able and willing to participate.
- Additional announcements:
 - The annual meeting of the Snohomish County Growers' Alliance will take place at WSU at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14.
 - The NRCS has again brought up their seasonal high tunnel initiative, a great cost-share program allowing farms to extend their growing season.

e. Update on Permit Activities – Tom Rowe

Nothing to report.

1:35 p.m.

5. Board Discussion and Possible Action:

a. Report from Nominating Committee for 2012 Ag Board Officers – Mike Bueler

- Marv Thomas and Mark Craven were nominated to serve as officers on the 2012 Ag Board. Board members were solicited for additional nominees, but no other names were submitted at this time. The election of 2012 Ag Board Officers will take place during the January 10 Ag Board meeting.
- Brian Bookey asked about the timing on filling the two current vacancies on the Board. Mr. White responded that we are in the process of filling those two vacant positions. He should have something to report back to the Board at next month's Ag Board meeting.

b. Update from *Use Matrix Subcommittee* – Linda Kuller

- Linda Kuller provided the Board with a brief summary of what was discussed at this morning's Use Matrix Subcommittee meeting. The objective of today's meeting was to look at the Ag Composting amendments, and then ask the Board to make a recommendation on moving all the Draft Code Amendments on to the Planning Commission. The subcommittee has concurrence on all issues, as posted on the back page of today's handout. Their discussion also included Ag Composting, but the committee didn't have enough members in attendance today to make a recommendation to the Board.

The following options with regard to SCC 30.22.130(107)(1) and (108)(2) were presented to the Board for discussion. Specifically, (107)(1)(e) included the following options:

- to retain the original language as recommended by the Ag Board some time ago, and as shown in the strikeout portion of the handout;
- to adopt replacement language as proposed by Brian Bookey (referenced in the handout); or
- to delete (107)(1)(e) in its entirety.

ACTION: A motion was made and the Board voted in favor of deleting SCC 30.22.130(107)(1)(e) in its entirety. However, that motion was subsequently modified, to include the following language to that section and to SCC 30.22.130(107)(2). The added language is shown in italics and reads as follows: “. . . Snohomish Conservation District Farm Plan *and/or any other established nutrient plan* must be on file . . .”

- Ms. Kuller provided the Board with an overview of the remaining Ag Code Amendments as summarized in her handout: the new definition for Ag Composting; revisions to reference notes for greenhouses, lath houses and nurseries relating to incidental sales; the prohibition of AM Radio Towers in A-10 zones; and a minor revision to the definition of Farm Support Business.

ACTION: A motion was made to finalize these changes to the ordinance and to make recommendation for their adoption to the Planning Commission. Ms. Kuller will make those revisions, submit to the PA for review, then re-submit the final draft revision to the Board prior to the Planning Commission’s January 24 briefing.

2:20 p.m.

6. Round Table Discussion of Topics of Interest

No further discussion than what has already been covered earlier on the agenda.

2:25 p.m.

7. Future Agenda Topics:

- January’s Election of 2012 Board Officers
- Presentation on Transfer of Development Rights during January’s meeting
- Further progress with the Slaughter Facility (TBD)
- Topics of next year’s Focus on Farming to be addressed on a future agenda (TBD)
- Ag Enterprise Zone will be discussed further during January’s Use Matrix Subcommittee meeting.
- Gerry Labish announced the *2012 Country Living Expo and Cattlemen’s Winterschool* on January 28, at Stanwood High School; Del Fox will be putting on a prime rib lunch.

2:30 p.m.

8. Closing